

# Tenant and Leaseholder Services

## Resident Involvement Expenses and Incentives Policy

### 1.0 Policy purpose and scope

Tenant and Leaseholder Services (TLS) engages residents to hear their views and is committed to supporting residents to get involved in monitoring and influencing their housing services.<sup>1</sup>

This Policy applies to Thanet District Council (TDC) tenants and leaseholders, who are collectively referred to as residents throughout this document.

The purpose of this policy:

- Identifies expenses and amounts residents can be reimbursed.
- Reimbursement of eligible expenses is clear, easy and transparent.
- How incentives are used to maximise engagement.
- Supports equality and the involvement of under-represented groups.
- Applies to all resident involvement activities arranged by the TLS.
- Applies to all groups formally recognised by the TLS.

### 2.0 Definition of expenses that can be reimbursed

The eligible expenses that can be reimbursed are:

- Travel expenses.
- Care expenses.
- Subsistence expenses e.g. food and overnight accommodation.
- Other expenses that may not be detailed within this Policy.

Residents can apply to be reimbursed for eligible expenses (i.e. the actual cost) incurred as a result of attending a meeting or event arranged or agreed by the TLS as set out in this Policy.

Only TDC tenants and leaseholders can be reimbursed expenses which will be paid via BACs payment.

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<sup>1</sup> [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017](#)

## 3.0. Travel expenses

Residents are encouraged to use the most economical form of transport. Public transport should be used wherever possible. Car or taxi sharing is also encouraged.

For some residents, especially those living in rural areas or with a disability or illness, travelling by taxi may be the only realistic option.

Wherever possible, TLS staff or authorised residents will pre-arrange travel through TDC account(s) to reduce the need for residents to pay for taxi or train travel and claim it back.

An authorised resident is a resident who is a member of a recognised group or who regularly attends meetings with us.

When arranging meetings/events we will consider venue locations and attendees to reduce travel time and cost.

All mileage claims are paid at the current [HM Revenues and Customs \(HMRC\) mileage rates](#).

### 3.1 Travel by rail or bus

- Where possible, staff will pre-book national rail journeys for residents. When booking, both staff and/or residents should purchase the best value ticket, taking into account any mobility requirements. For reimbursement a receipt must be provided for all journeys.
- Bus journeys will be reimbursed with a valid ticket. If the ticket is needed for a return journey staff will arrange to take an image of the valid ticket.

### 3.2 Travel by taxi

Arrangements for taxi travel should be made locally by staff or authorised residents using a TDC approved taxi firm. Sharing of taxis is encouraged and expected wherever possible.

Eligibility for a taxi is as follows:

- A disability or illness that means the resident cannot use public transport or drive a private vehicle.
- Where/when public transport is not available or practical. This may be the case for:
  - Some of our rural communities that are not serviced by public transport.
  - If the meeting venue is not on or within a reasonable walking distance of a public transport route.
  - When the time taken to get to a meeting using public transport is unreasonable.
- When group travel by taxi is more cost effective than individual fares.
- Exceptions can be considered on an individual basis.
- For reimbursement a receipt(s) must be provided for all journeys.

### 3.3 Private car use

- Car mileage claims will be paid at current HMRC rates. To encourage car sharing an incentive for each additional passenger (excluding driver) can be claimed, in line with HMRC rates.

- The maximum claim for a single day's journey is 50 miles each way. Any mileage likely to exceed 50 miles each way should be agreed by TLS in advance of the journey.
- Any congestion and toll charges will be reimbursed. Receipts will need to be provided.

### 3.4 Motorcycle use

- Residents travelling to our events or meetings by motorcycle can claim mileage at the current HMRC rate. The additional passenger incentive does not apply to motorcycles.

### 3.5 Car parking fees

- Car parking fees will be reimbursed with a valid parking ticket, image of the ticket or receipt. Parking fees should be claimed for the period of the meeting or event attended including a reasonable time to get to and from the venue.
- Parking or speeding fines and clamping charges will not be reimbursed.

### 3.6 Bicycle use

- Residents travelling to our events/meetings by bicycle can claim mileage at the current HMRC rate.

## 5.0 Care expenses

Some residents are the primary carer for member(s) of their family and to enable their involvement, we can assist with any additional care expenses incurred as a result of attending an event or meeting.

The additional care expense can be claimed by the primary carer to cover the duration of the meeting or event attended as well as reasonable travel times. No care expense can be claimed for care provided by a member of the same household or with parental responsibility.

All types of carer expenses must be agreed in advance by the TLS.

### 5.1 Childcare expenses

- We will reimburse the agreed resident's additional childcare expenses and recognise this may vary depending on the situation.
- Choosing who should look after a child is a matter for parents or primary carers. We must ensure the expense is legitimate and encourage good practice in child protection. Therefore we will not reimburse the cost of unregistered childcare.
- Childcare costs can be claimed for childcare provided by a registered childcare provider. We will reimburse additional actual costs agreed in advance.
- We will not reimburse childcare costs for attendance at events where children are welcome to attend or where in-house childcare is available.
- Childcare costs will be reimbursed for children up to the age of 16 years.
- Childcare costs will not be reimbursed for school age children during school hours, except where the child(ren) is/are home educated by the person attending the meeting or event.

## 5.2 Adult care expenses

- We will reimburse agreed expenses where a resident has responsibility for the care of another person. We recognise this may vary depending on the situation.
- We will ensure the expense is legitimate and encourage good practice in adult care. Therefore we will not reimburse the cost of unregistered care.
- Care costs can be reimbursed for formal care arrangements through a registered care provider. We will reimburse additional actual costs agreed in advance.

## 6.0 Subsistence

### 6.1 Food and drink

- We will always try to offer refreshments to residents attending meetings and events that we arrange. This will vary depending on the length of the meeting:
  - Tea, coffee and biscuits or cake will be provided for meetings lasting two – three hours.
  - A light meal will be provided for meetings expected to last over 5 hours.
- We will accommodate reasonable dietary requirements when advised. However if a resident has complex dietary requirements they may prefer to bring their own food and be reimbursed the cost.
- Where refreshments are not provided, food and drink (non-alcoholic) subsistence can be claimed up to the maximum amount using the [HMRC subsistence expenses scale rate](#).
- We will only be reimbursed the actual cost incurred and when a receipt is provided.

### 6.2 Accommodation

- We will pay for overnight accommodation where agreed with resident(s) and deemed to be necessary or more cost effective than travelling on consecutive days. We will aim to book this in advance.

## 7.0 Other expenses

From time to time we may involve residents in ad hoc task and finish projects/groups which result in incurred expenses that are not detailed in this policy.

- Other expenses will be considered on an individual basis. Residents should contact the TLS Resident Involvement Team for clarification and approval before any expense is incurred.
- Other expenses must be supported by times, dates and valid receipts.

## 8.0 Expenses which cannot be claimed

- Any parking fines or clamping charges incurred will not be reimbursed.
- More than the actual cost incurred or actual additional cost incurred as a result of getting involved.
- Reimburse the expense if a valid receipt or miles travelled are not provided.
- We will not reimburse expenses that would have already been incurred and are not an additional cost.
- Loss of earnings or for attending meetings or events.
- Printing and mailing costs. All relevant meeting documents will be provided and it is therefore not necessary to provide a provision for claiming for printing or mailing costs. In certain circumstances this may be considered as set out in section 7 of this Policy.
- Equipment costs. Equipment considered necessary for a resident to carry out a specific involvement activity will be either provided or loaned to residents depending on cost.
- Additional internet or telephone costs incurred. We will consider reimbursement of additional expenses incurred as set out in section 7 of this policy.

## 9.0 Reimbursement of expenses

### 9.1. What residents need to do

- Residents will need to complete and sign a general expense form, Appendix 1 or carer expense form, Appendix 2 and provide a valid receipt.
- Expense forms are available on request, at meetings and available online.
- All resident expense payment must be authorised by a member of the Resident Involvement Team.
- Resident expense claims over £100 must be authorised by the Resident Involvement Manager.
- Forms must be submitted within two calendar months of the date the expense incurred or journey undertaken. Expenses submitted beyond this timeframe may not be accepted.

### 9.2 Payment of expenses

- Expenses will be reimbursed by direct payment into the resident's bank account.
- Residents will need to complete a bank details form, Appendix 3 to tell us their bank details. The details will be held securely, will only be used for the purpose of reimbursing expenses and will be deleted when a tenancy ends.
- It is the responsibility of the resident to notify us if their bank details change.
- We will aim to reimburse using direct payments within 10 working days following our receipt of the expenses form.
- Payments may be delayed if forms are not fully completed or if supporting receipts are not provided.

## 10.0 Incentives

We will use ad hoc incentives to reward and encourage involvement, to ensure statistical validity or target underrepresented groups which may include:

- Free ad-hoc training opportunities.
- Nomination for awards and attendance at award ceremonies (TDC, local and national).
- Attendance at ad-hoc events and conferences.
- Use of prize draws or competitions to promote and engage higher response.

### 10.1 Payment of incentives

- Terms and conditions will apply to incentive payments. We reserve the right to withdraw incentives if a resident's council tax, rent and or service charge account is in arrears. Incentive payment may instead be used as a credit on their account. This does not apply to reimbursement of expenses incurred.

## 11. Monitoring

- All resident expense claims in relation to resident involvement activities must follow this policy.
- It is the resident's responsibility to ensure their claim is accurate and they must confirm this by signing the declaration on their claim form.
- Expenses claims will be checked by the Resident Involvement team and are subject to further internal audit at any time.
- We reserve the right to make checks at any time to verify any claim for expenses.
- Claims may be refused if there is any doubt about the validity of any part of the claim.
- Fraudulent or inflated claims may result in a resident being suspended or excluded from formal resident involvement activities and expenses being repaid.

### 11.2 HMRC

- The mileage and subsistence rates will change as and when HMRC guidelines change.
- For tax and legal reasons it is important to reimburse residents' expenses as accurately as possible. Any money paid over and above the actual expense incurred may be regarded as income by HMRC.

### 11.3 Benefits

- We will only pay actual expenses incurred and therefore expense claim payments will not usually affect any welfare benefits a resident may receive. However, it is the resident's responsibility to check with the relevant benefit/taxation agencies for clarification of their individual circumstances. Visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits) for more information.

- We will, on request, provide a resident who receives payments as a result of claiming expense(s) or an incentive with a letter to provide to the benefit/taxation agencies.

## 12.0 Equality and diversity

TDC will support all our residents, to have the same opportunity to get involved. Through the implementation of this policy we aim to treat all residents fairly; showing dignity and respect regardless of where they live, or protected characteristics.

An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 5) has been carried out to ensure this policy meets the needs of all sections of the community. This will be published alongside this policy. Full details of our approach are set out in our Equality and Diversity Policy.

## 13.0 Policy document control

We will consult on any changes made to this policy which will be reviewed every 3 years.

Date	Version	Action	Amendments
4 August 2021	1	New policy draft	Word changes made to include feedback from residents consultation.
8 April 2022	-	EIA	Full stops added to the end of bullet points to improve accessibility.
16 June 2022	1	New policy approved for adoption by cabinet	

## 14.0 Appendices

- Appendix 1 [General expense form](#)
- Appendix 2 [Carer expense form](#)
- Appendix 3 [Bank details form](#)
- Appendix 4 [RI expense and incentive payment procedure](#)
- Appendix 5 [Equality Impact Assessment](#)